

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9406

INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 7073

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EGEN, VE

SUBJECT: UNDER SECRETARY ROBINSON'S VISIT - SELA

1. SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO PEREZ GUERRERO, SELA IS TO BE A FORUM FOR COORDINATING LATIN AMERICAN POSITIONS ON INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ISSUES AND A MEANS OF PROMOTING MULTILATERAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. IT WILL HAVE A SMALL SECRETARIAT BUT WILL AVOID BUREAUCRATIZED "INSTITUTIONALISM." THE LATIN AMERICANS ARE SCHEDULED TO MEET IN PANAMA LATE THIS MONTH TO BEGIN WRITING SELA'S CHARTER. IN PART, THE VENEZUELAN CONCERN FOR SELA REFLECTS THE INTEREST OF CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ IN USING ITS BAPTISM AS THE OCCASION FOR THE HEMISPHERE SUMMIT HE WANTS TO STAGE HERE IN THE FALL. END SUMMARY

2. MINISTER OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AFFAIRS PEREZ GUERRERO RAISED THE SUBJECT OF SELA DURING HIS JULY 9 MEETING WITH UNDER SECRETARY ROBINSON AND TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW THE VENEZUELAN POSITION. PEREZ GUERRERO NOTED THAT THE GOV
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HAD FROM THE OUTSET REACTED MORE FAVORABLY THAN OTHER LATIN

AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS TO ECHEVERRIA'S INITIATIVE--ALTHOUGH, HE HASTENED TO SAY, NONE HAD REJECTED IT. ACCORDING TO THE MINISTER, THE GOV DID FIND THE ORIGINAL MEXICAN IDEAS ON SELA TENDING TOWARD OVERBLOWN "INSTITUTIONALISM," WHILE THE VENEZUELAN THOUGHT THE NEW ORGANIZATION WOULD BETTER SERVE LATIN AMERICAN INTERESTS AS A SMALL AND FLEXIBLE "MECHANISM." NOW, HE ASSERTED, THE GOM HAS COME AROUND TO THAT LATTER VIEW AND SELA IS VERY MUCH A MEXICAN-VENEZUELAN PROJECT.

3. IN THE VENEZUELAN VIEW, SELA WILL BE ESTABLISHED TO SERVE:
(1) AS A FORUM FOR EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ISSUES OF MUTUAL INTEREST TO THE LATIN AMERICANS AND (2) AS A FOCAL POINT FOR THE PROMOTION (BUT NOT EXECUTION) OF SPECIFIC MULTILATERAL LATIN AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. IN ITS FIRST ROLE, SELA WILL REPLACE CECLA AND PROVIDE THE MEANS FOR THE COORDINATION OF LATIN AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC POLICY AND THE PREPARATION OF LATIN AMERICAN POSITIONS FOR MEETINGS AND NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES AND IN INTERNATIONAL FORA. IN ITS SECOND FUNCTION, SELA WILL PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF JOINT INDUSTRIAL INITIATIVES, RESEARCH CENTERS AND THE LIKE, WITH ACTUAL IMPLEMENTATION TO BE ASSIGNED SUBSEQUENTLY TO OTHER INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS THE IDB.

4. PEREZ GUERRERO EMPHASIZED THROUGHOUT THAT SELA WILL BE AN ECONOMIC BODY UNCONCERNED WITH POLITICAL QUESTIONS--ENTIRELY PRAGMATIC AND NON-CONFRONTATIONAL. HE SAID THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT BE INCLUDED IN THIS SYSTEM, BUT SELA WOULD SEEK TO ENLIST OUR COOPERATION WHENEVER THAT MIGHT BE NEEDED. SUCH COOPERATION WOULD, OF COURSE, ALSO BE INVITED FROM OTHER INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES, ALTHOUGH IN MANY INSTANCES THE US WILL BE THE MOST "NATURAL PARTNER."

5. THE MINISTER CONCEDED THAT SELA, UNLIKE CECLA, WILL BY NECESSITY HAVE A SMALL SECRETARIAT, BUT "SAFEGUARDS" WILL BE CREATED TO KEEP THE SECRETARIAT FROM GROWING TOO LARGE OR TOO "INSTITUTIONALIZED." PEREZ GUERRERO SAID THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES WOULD MEET IN PANAMA TOWARD THE END OF THE MONTH TO BEGIN WRITING A "CHARTER" FOR SELA.

6. THE UNDER SECRETARY EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THIS
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REVIEW OF SELA'S PURPOSES, NOTING THAT THE USG UNDERSTANDS SELA TO BE A LATIN AMERICAN INITIATIVE AND AS SUCH, LATIN AMERICA'S BUSINESS. THE AMBASSADOR COMMENTED THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS LONG SUPPORTED LATIN AMERICAN ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION. IN RESPONSE TO A DIRECT QUESTION, PEREZ GUERRERO ADMITTED THAT SELA WOULD PROVIDE A FORUM FOR DISCUSSION OF JOINT ACTION ON COMMODITY QUESTIONS BUT ASSERTED THAT SUCH DISCUSSIONS AND INITIATIVES WOULD TAKE PLACE IN ANY

CASE, WITH OR WITHOUT SELA.

7. COMMENT: PEREZ GUERRERO CLEARLY TOOK ADVANTAGE OF MR. ROBINSON'S PRESENCE IN CARACAS TO ATTEMPT TO REASSURE THE USG AT A HIGH LEVEL AS TO THE OBJECTIVES OF SELA. WE HAVE NOTED SOME DEGREE OF PUZZLEMENT HERE OVER THE LACK OF ANY USG REACTION TO SELA--A HEALTHY CONDITION IN OUR JUDGMENT.

8. WE ALSO NOTE RATHER INTENSE RECENT ACTIVITY ON THE SELA FRONT. RABASA WAS IN CARACAS ON A QUICK AND RATHER MYSTERIOUS TRIP JULY 3, PROBABLY TO DISCUSS FURTHER MEXICAN/VENEZUELAN EFFORTS TO GET SELA OFF THE GROUND. FOREIGN MINISTER ESCOVAR SALOM HAD SCHEDULED A TRIP TO ARGENTINA (NOW CANCELED) AND WILL BE GOING TO BRAZIL NEXT WEEK, AGAIN UNDOUBTEDLY TO TALK UP SELA. HE WILL ALSO REPORTEDLY BE RETURNING RABASA'S CALL A LITTLE LATER THIS MONTH. PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ HAS A GOOD DEAL OF POLITICAL CAPITAL RIDING ON THIS SCHEME SINCE THE OFFICIAL BAPTISM OF SELA IS TO BE THE OCCASION FOR THE CHIEF-OF-STATE MEETING IN CARACAS HE HAS BEEN ADVERTISING SO HEAVILY THESE PAST MONTHS. SELA IS PROBABLY ESSENTIAL TO THAT ENTERPRISE BECAUSE IT IS THE ONLY APPARENT INSTRUMENT AROUND TO WEDGE FIDEL CASTRO INTO A MEETING OF HIS PEERS.
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